

# LOWER COLUMBIA RIVER ESTUARY PARTNERSHIP



## **Request for Proposals for Community-based Habitat Restoration Projects Lower Columbia River and Estuary Projects**

**RFP RELEASED: NOVEMBER 8, 2004**

**PROPOSAL DUE: CLOSE OF BUSINESS FEBRUARY 11, 2005**

Please submit applications **via email**, when possible, to:

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The Lower Columbia River Estuary Partnership (Estuary Partnership) is pleased to request proposals for the Community-based Habitat Restoration Program. The Estuary Partnership has received an award through NOAA Restoration Center's Community-based Restoration Program to fund marine habitat restoration projects in the Lower Columbia River and Estuary and in the Tillamook Bay Estuary. This award will be used to fund restoration projects designed to build the capacity of local efforts in the lower Columbia River and estuary, and to institute a partnership with the Tillamook Estuary Partnership to support restoration in the Tillamook Bay national estuary.

The objective of the Estuary Partnership and NOAA's Community-based Restoration Program (CRP) is to bring together citizens, public and non-profit organizations, watershed groups, industry, corporations and businesses, youth conservation corps, students, landowners, and local government, state, and Federal agencies to implement habitat restoration projects that benefit NOAA trust resources (anadromous, estuarine, and marine species and their habitats). This program recognizes the significant role that partnerships can play in making habitat restoration happen within communities, and acknowledges that habitat restoration is often best implemented through technical and monetary support provided at the community level. (For more information <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration/> or <http://nature.org/initiatives/marine/work/art9023.html> )

The Estuary Partnership works to protect and restore the nationally significant lower Columbia River and estuary, one of 28 estuaries in the nation designated as an "Estuary of National Significance." The Estuary Partnership is a collaborative program of the states of Oregon and Washington, federal agencies, non-profit organizations, businesses and economic interests and citizens. The Estuary Partnership works in five specific areas to: increase habitat and habitat functions; improve land use practices to protect ecosystems; enhance education opportunities and provide information about the lower river and estuary to build stewardship among all citizens; improve coordination among multi-jurisdictions and interests; and reduce conventional and toxic pollutants.

The Estuary Partnership Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (Management Plan) calls for restoration of 16,000 acres of habitat, including 3,000 acres of estuarine habitat, by 2010. The Management Plan is an ecosystem-based plan that incorporates species recovery but also works to ensure all habitats for fish and wildlife are protected.

### APPLICANT QUALIFICATIONS

Eligible applicants include: governmental bodies, community and environmental organizations, schools and school districts, community colleges, and universities. Eligible governmental bodies include any state, county, city, town conservation district, or other political subdivision, municipal or quasi-municipal corporation, or any tribe recognized by the federal government.

Projects must be located in the National Estuary Program boundaries of the Lower Columbia River Estuary Partnership (please see separate Tillamook Bay RFP for guidance on Tillamook projects). The Estuary Partnership study area encompasses the lower 146 river miles of the Columbia River from Bonneville Dam to the Pacific Ocean including the tidally influenced portions of its tributaries.

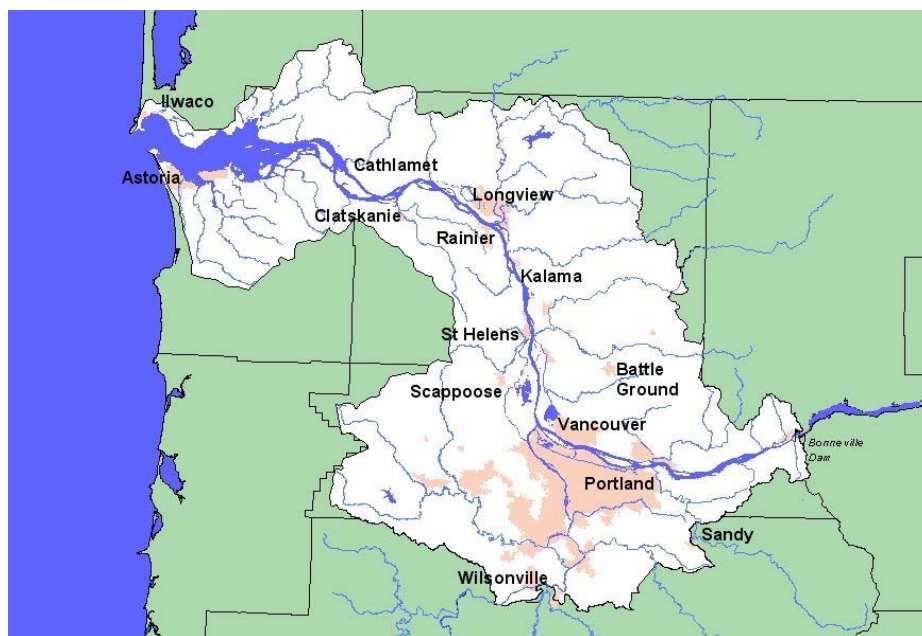


Figure 1: Estuary Partnership Study Area

The Estuary Partnership requires that the organizations receiving the funds be positioned to ensure efficiency and effectiveness in dispersal of the Estuary Partnership funds. Specific non-technical criteria include:

- **Organizational Capacity:** The organization receiving funds from the Estuary Partnership must provide description of their administrative and managerial capacity to administer contract funds and meet project objectives.
- **Demonstration of Collaborative Effort:** Developing partnerships among communities, organizations, individuals and agencies is a critical element to long term estuary restoration success. Projects that are supported by more than one entity will be ranked higher during the Estuary Partnership project review process.
- **Percentage of Total Project Funds Secured:** The Estuary Partnership will place a priority on funding projects that otherwise meet all criteria when other funds are being contributed in addition to required 1:1 non-federal match.

## FUNDING

We anticipate awarding contracts **between \$25,000 and \$150,000**. Applications should request funds within that range and provide the **1:1** non-federal match as required. The project period can be up to 18-24 months. Total funding available for this RFP is \$330,000.00. (This will include at least one project from the lower Columbia River and one from Tillamook Bay.)

Community-based Habitat Restoration project expenses are reimbursable. Payments will be made to contractors when they invoice the Estuary Partnership for work completed. Payment schedules are determined in the contractor's scope of work created after the project has been selected.

This will be a competitive review process. We are soliciting a wide array of proposed projects for community-based restoration of habitats. We always encourage applicants to note multiple benefits to many species, habitat, and ecosystems of any proposed project.

## Match Requirements

The Estuary Partnership Habitat Restoration Fund provides seed money to individual restoration projects that benefit living marine resources. These funds are intended to help project sponsors leverage funds and other contributions from the public and private sector to implement locally significant projects. Applicants must provide a 1:1 match with non-federal funds. The project match can come from a variety of public and private sources and can include in-kind goods and services. ***Note however that neither Federal funds nor Federal funds passed through state agencies are eligible to be used as matching funds.***

## Project Period

Projects must be initiated within six months of contract execution and completed by April 30, 2007. Awards are expected to be made in April of 2005.

## RESTORATION FUNDING PRIORITIES

Over the past three years, the Estuary Partnership has been successful in developing a Habitat Restoration program and securing funds to disperse towards restoration projects. A significant portion of those funds have been focused on habitat for threatened and endangered species.

## Priority Restoration Strategies

**Habitat Enhancement.** Habitat enhancement entails the improvement of a targeted ecological attribute and/or process. Groups and organizations that participate in restoration activities are implementing enhancement projects that improve different elements of the ecosystem, using strategies that include: riparian plantings and fencing; tide gate removal or culvert removal or replacement; invasive species removal; and stream bank stabilization.

**Habitat Restoration.** Restoration means the return to a previously existing ecological condition. This can involve more intense modification and manipulation of site conditions than enhancement. As a result, restoration projects typically require more careful planning, design, and maintenance than enhancement projects. Miles of habitat can be gained by reconnecting tidal channels that have been cut off by tidewaters, dike construction, and placement of fill material for land-use activities.

**Habitat Protection.** Habitat protection projects can involve a variety of approaches. One option is to invoke land use regulations in the form of zoning designation and/or protection ordinances, such as defined riparian setbacks and designation of critical areas. Land use regulations that can be applied are included in comprehensive plans, shoreline management master programs, floodplain management plans, and coastal zone management plans. ***\*note: Land/easement acquisitions are not eligible for these contracts. Funds from this program are intended for on-the-ground restoration – most habitat protection measures would need to be completed prior to an award of NOAA funds.***

### **Priority Restoration Activities**

Estuary restoration activities that will be considered for funding include restoration of estuarine, tidal and diked slough habitats, dendritic drainage networks, and diked and tidal wetland habitats through:

- Breaching or removing levees
- Improving wetlands and nearshore aquatic plant communities in tidal areas
- Reestablishing flow patterns that have been altered by causeways, pile dikes, and tide gates
- Restoring shallow channels in inter-tidal areas
- Restoring and enhancing connections between lakes, sloughs, side channels, the floodplain, and the main channel
- Removing “derelict” fishing gear or marine debris

### **CRITERIA FOR IDENTIFYING AND PRIORITIZING HABITAT PROTECTION AND RESTORATION PROJECTS**

*(Full description of all criteria is available from the Estuary Partnership.)*

#### **Ecosystem Criteria**

- a. Habitat Connectivity
- b. Areas of Historic Habitat Type Loss
- c. Improvement in Ecosystem Function
- d. Adequate Size and Shape
- e. Level of Complexity
- f. Accessibility for Target Species
  - Is the project area Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) as identified by NOAA Fisheries, or areas within EFH identified as Habitat Areas of Particular Concern?
  - Is the project areas identified as critical habitat for federally or state listed estuarine and marine species?
  - Is the project areas identified as important habitat for marine mammals and turtles?
  - Is the project areas identified as important nursery habitat?

#### **Implementation Criteria**

- a. Use Natural Processes to Restore and Maintain Structure over Habitat Creation
- b. Community Support and Participation
- c. Potential for Self-Maintenance and Certainty of Success
- d. Potential for Improvement in Ecosystem Function While Avoiding Impacts to Healthy and Functioning Ecosystems
- e. Avoid Sites Where Irreversible Change Has Occurred
- f. Capacity of Sponsor/Partnership
- g. Project Context within Broader Management and Planning Objectives

#### **Monitoring Criteria\***

- a. Monitoring and Evaluation with Relationship to Stated Goals and Objectives
- b. Linkages to Reference Site(s)
- c. Transferability of Results

\*The Estuary Partnership and NOAA will work together with the project sponsors to determine monitoring parameters and performance targets for successful applicants based on the NOAA Restoration Center Minimum Monitoring Requirements:

#### Before the project begins:

1. Develop at least one clearly stated goal (i.e., large scale, idealistic, long-term)
2. Develop at least two objective statements related to the project goal; one each for *structural* and *functional* elements of the project (i.e., realistic, measurable)
3. Select one parameter to be evaluated (i.e., thing to be measured) for each objective statement

4. Define a target value for each parameter (i.e., a realistic value that represents success for the defined objective)
5. Define a reference value for each parameter (i.e., a value that represents ideal conditions)

To conduct the project evaluation:

1. Measure each selected parameters as often as necessary to meet the intent of the objective, including one sampling date before the beginning of the project work
2. For each sampling date (minimum of one in addition to the pre-project sampling), indicate whether the target value was reached for each measured parameter

For more information see: [www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration/projects\\_programs/crp/partners\\_funding/project\\_reports](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration/projects_programs/crp/partners_funding/project_reports)

## ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL PROJECT PROPOSALS

Projects in any of the above categories with the following elements in place should consider submitting a proposal:

- Project is fully aligned with Lower Columbia River Estuary Partnership Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan and it should identify, or is prepared to address, short and long-term measures of success.
- Project implementation will result in tangible **on-the-ground** restoration of specific resources. Preference will be given to projects that direct these funds towards the physical restoration component of a project.
- Proposals should address at a minimum reversing the impacts of habitat loss, degraded water quality, sedimentation, and/or flooding.
- Project provides benefits to **multiple marine species or habitats**; benefits are not limited to anadromous fish. Potential target species include: Anadromous fish, coastal pelagic fish (including sardines, anchovies, etc.) groundfish and rockfish, shellfish, and marine mammals. Potential target habitats may include: Salt marshes, tidal flats, and wetlands; submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV), including eelgrass and kelp; oyster, crab and other shellfish habitat; and estuaries and rivers
- Project involves significant **community engagement** and support that is tied to the restoration activities. This should be done to ensure the community is aware of restoration activities, it feels ownership in specific projects, and can voice any concerns there may be.
- Project is staffed by a local project director.
- Project involves partners. Preference will be given to proposals that foster partnerships and collaborative efforts.
- Project provides a minimum **1:1** non-federal match.

## Compliance with Federal Laws: Applicant's Permit Requirements

Applicants must provide where relevant a list and status (obtained, application filed, when anticipate obtaining approval, or have not applied) of all necessary federal, state, tribal and local permits required to complete the project and the appropriate regulatory agency contact (name, title, phone) for each permitting agency. The Estuary Partnership will require copies of permit and compliance documentation once the documentation is secured.

Contractors will be required to satisfy all financial and programmatic requirements and meet all local, state and tribal environmental laws and Federal consistency requirements before project implementation.

**National Environmental Policy Act Requirements.** All proposals will be reviewed for National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance by NOAA Fisheries. All projects must comply with NEPA. For more information on NEPA, please visit NOAA's website at <http://www.nepa.noaa.gov>.

Applicants will be required to provide detailed information on the activities to be conducted, locations, sites, species and habitat to be affected, possible construction activities, and any environmental concerns that may exist (e.g., the use and disposal of hazardous or toxic chemicals, introduction of non-indigenous species, impacts to endangered and threatened species, the presence of historic structures) in order for NOAA to make a NEPA determination on each proposal.

In addition to providing specific information that will serve as the basis for any required impact analyses, applicants may also be requested to assist NOAA in drafting an environmental assessment, if NOAA determines an assessment is required (if one does not already exist for the proposed activity). Applicants will also be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying and implementing feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal.

### **APPLICATION PROCESS**

Application materials are available from the Estuary Partnership and must be used when submitting an application for funding. The completed application will include:

1. Background and Project Description (not to exceed 2 pgs)
2. Project Narrative (not to exceed 6 pgs)
3. Project budget
4. Three examples of relevant work which should include a description of the type of work performed and relevance to this solicitation.

Materials should be developed single spaced, with no less than one inch margins and 11 point font.

### **Project Evaluation and Selection**

The Estuary Partnership's project review process included two steps. 1) The Estuary Partnership Science Work Group reviews projects for their ecological benefit and technical merit. 2) The Project Review Committee, a subcommittee of the Science Work Group, conducts a site visit, then formally scores the projects based on the Criteria for Identifying and Prioritizing Habitat Protection and Restoration Projects, and makes final recommendations to the Estuary Partnership staff. Proposals will also be evaluated by NOAA Restoration Center staff.

### **ADMINISTRATIVE AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS**

Upon award notification, projects will be informed as to financial and programmatic reporting requirements. Progress reports will be filed according to NOAA Electronic Report Format Form: [www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration/projects\\_programs/crp/partners\\_funding/project\\_reports](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration/projects_programs/crp/partners_funding/project_reports). This information will assist the Estuary Partnership in meeting Federal guidelines for reporting expenses and project status on a semi-annual basis.

After the selection process and before work begins, the selected contractors will work with Estuary Partnership staff to create a Statement of Work that includes a payment schedule, narrative description of tasks, outlined deliverables, and itemized budget.

Contractors are also required to have a safety plan in place for any volunteers working on the project (e.g., liability waivers).